

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-03

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 SCA-01 SY-04 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6966

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 7633

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, CPRS

SUBJECT: AMERICAN PRIEST BRIEFLY HELD BY POLICE

1. KOREAN POLICE NOV 14 PICKED UP AMERICAN MARYKNOLL PRIEST, JAMES SINNET, FROM INCHON ALONG WITH THREE KOREANS IN COURSE OF ANTI-GOVT DEMONSTRATION. DEMONSTRATION INVOLVED GROUP OF ABOUT 25 WIVES AND MOTHERS OF EMERGENCY MEASURE COURT MARTIAL PRISONERS ACCOMPANIED BY A FEW FOREIGN PRIESTS, MISSIONARIES AND KOREAN SYMPATHIZERS. AP EYEWITNESS CORRESPONDENT HAS REPORTED SINNETT SLUGGED POLICEMAN. FATHER SINNETT ANPSOTHERS WERE ALL TAKEN TO POLICE STATION FOR INTERROGATION. SINNETT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED AT APPROX 3:30 P.M. KOREANS WHO WERE ARRESTED AND ARE STILL BEING HELD ARE KIM YOON-SHIK, FORMER MEMBER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WIFE OF REV. KIM KYONG-NAK, FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE URBAN INDUSTRIAL MISSIONS, AND MOTHER OF EVANGELIST YI TAE HAK.

2. GROUP WHICH WAS DEMANDING RELEASE OF PRISONERS WAS MARCHING FROM MYONGDONG CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL TO CRHISTIAN BUILDING NEAR EAST GATE TO ATTEND REGULAR THURSDAY MORNING PRAYER MEETING FOR THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

3. PRIEST ACCOMPANYING GROUP CALLED EMBASSY IMMEDIATELY
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TO REPORT THAT FATHER SINNETT WAS IN POLICE CUSTODY.

AMBASSADOR, TELEPHONED MARYKNOLL SUPERIOR FATHER JOHN CORCORAN, WHO EXPRESSED APPRECIATION BUT REQUESTED NO SPECIAL INTERVENTION. CORCORAN SAID HE WAS URGING MARYKNOLL PRIESTS TO "COOL IT." AT SAME TIME AT AMBASSADOR'S INSTRUCTION CONSULAR OFFICER MADE INQUIRIES WITH POLICE AUTHORITIES REGARDING SINNETT'S WHEREABOUTS AND STATUS. AFTER SEVERAL HOURS OF EVASIVENESS, POLICE INDICATED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CHARGES AGAINST FATHER SINNETT, AND THAT HE WOULD BE RELEASED SOON. WHEN CONSULAR SECTION WAS ABOUT TO SEND OFFICER TO POLICE STATION, IT WAS INFORMED AT 3:30 P.M. THAT THE FATHER HAD ALREADY BEEN RELEASED. FATHER CORCORAN AGAIN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION WHEN EMBASSY INFORMED HIM OF RELEASE.

4. LATEST REPORT FROM AMERICAN MISSIONARY SOURCE IS THAT DESPITE HEAVY POLICE CORDON AROUND CHRISTIAN BUILDING WHERE PRAYER VIGIL HAS CONTINUED ALL DAY, FATHER SINNETT HAS ENTERED BUILDING AND JOINED PROTESTERS. SINNETT REPORTEDLY WAS SPECIFICALLY CAUTIONED BY POLICE BEFORE HIS RELEASE NOT TO JOIN THIS PRAYER MEETING. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT SEVERAL OTHER AMERICAN MISSIONARIES ARE PRESENT.
SNEIDER

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